

1827

THE
VICAR'S GARDEN;
OR,
THE GREEK MEDAL.



HUDSON :
PUBLISHED BY WM. E. NORMAN.
W. B. Stebbins, Printer.

1821.

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April 1831 -

from
Eliza Marsh

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ELVAH KARSHNER

THE
VICAR'S GARDEN,
OR, THE
GREEK MEDAL.

E'en children gather'd, with endearing wile,
And pluck'd his gown, to gain the good man's
smile.

Goldsmith.

BY AN AMERICAN LADY.



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Flies

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THE VICAR'S GARDEN, &c.



In a remote village of England stands an ancient building, which the neighbouring rustics dignify with the name of "The College;" but whether this honor arises from any tradition they have concerning it, or the vicinity of an academy for young gentlemen, I could never learn. Be that as it may, the cloisters belonging to the ruins, and that side of the church-yard which joins them, have long been claimed by the young academicians as their rightful play ground.

In the same village lived a poor but honest woman, named Mary; who sometimes carried cakes and fruit to sell at the school. But, at last, poor Mary died, and was buried in that very part of the church-yard which the school boys had chosen for their play ground.

Little Jem, her son, was about ten years old ; and being desirous of earning an honest living, as his poor mother had done, soon found many people willing to employ him in going errands, and doing little jobs, for which he received some odd pence, and sometimes a good meal.

But poor Jem had observed for several days that the grass was all worn off his mother's grave by the heedless feet of the school boys, who continually trampled over it. Accordingly, on the first moonlight night, he repaired to the burying-ground with a basket full of nice smooth turf from the common ; this he placed neatly over the grave, and then sat down by the side. The spot was near the Vicar's garden, and divided from it by a wall and deep ditch. Over this wall, however, by means of a ladder, a party of the scholars had climbed, with the wicked intention of stealing the fruit. The two last were to bring the ladder with them, and this kept them very far behind their companions.

They were going to take their way

directly over poor Mary's grave, but the foremost, named Townsend, stumbled on Jem's empty basket, and both fell—"How now," cried he, "what have we here, a basket? just the thing to put our peaches in, Stanhope."

"No, young gentlemen; that is my basket," said Jem, starting from the grave.

"And who are you?" asked Townsend: and letting go the basket and ladder both at once, seized Jem by the collar, exclaiming—"And pray, sir, don't you know that this part of the church-yard belongs to the gentlemen of the school? so down with you, and ask pardon for being here."

"I know," replied the undaunted Jem, "that you young gentlemen choose to make this your play-ground; and that you pull poor people's graves to pieces; and you have torn all the grass off my dear mother's too; so I came to-night to put some more on, and you can't hinder me, Mr. Townsend, from coming to-morrow night."

"Can't I, though," said Townsend; saying which, he began to beat poor Jem, in the most cowardly manner, who all the time disdained to utter a word; but, at last, Stanhope interposed in his favor, and Townsend desisted, exclaiming—"Now, my little master, will you come here again to-morrow night."

"Yes," replied Jem; "if you tear the grass off my mother's grave, I will."

"What an audacious little rascal to speak to the son of a gentleman in this manner!" cried Townsend; but this son of a gentleman forgot, that when rich men, or children, disgrace themselves by mean or dishonest actions, they are below the contempt of the very beings they affect to despise.

"Come," cried Stanhope, "we shall be found out, if you stay any longer; for I think I hear old sly Ralph, the gardener, creeping along the other side of the wall."

And he thought right; for old sly Ralph (as he called him) had traced their steps to that part of the wall

which they had just scaled. Here he stood some time to consider how they could climb the wall, when suddenly recollecting the means of a ladder—"The young rogues!" he exclaimed; "but I'll be a match for them." So saying, he placed one of his ladders against the wall, and looking over the top, saw poor Jem sitting on his mother's grave, and alone, for Stanhope and his companions were out of sight. Instantly concluding he was the culprit, the gardener softly descended the ladder on the other side of the wall, and caught poor Jem roughly by the collar; who in a respectful manner, begged to know why he was so rudely handled?

"Why, you young villain; what! you thought to get off unpunished another night, did you? Very well, Mr. Jem; so, it was you stole my fine ripe melons the other night, was it? and now you would have carried away all my peaches, would you? But you shan't go unpunished; no, I will serve you as I would have all other thieves served."

"You may beat me as hard as you please, Mr. Gardener," said Jem, with the pride of conscious innocence; "but I am no thief for all that. And I never saw, nor touched one of your peaches or melons either."

"Indeed, Mr. Honesty!" replied Ralph, taking up near a dozen nice ripe peaches, which Stanhope, in his haste to escape, had dropped—"indeed, Mr. Honesty!" he repeated, as he took up Jem's empty basket; "pray then, how came these peaches here if you never touched them? and what was this basket brought for? I suppose you never saw *this* before?"

"Yes, I have though," replied Jem; "for it was my own dear mother's basket, and now she is dead, it is mine; and I brought it here to-night myself, but not to put your peaches in, Mr. Ralph, for, I am sure, I did not know there was one there, till you took them up."

"No equivocations, Mr. Jem," said Ralph; facts are stubborn things, and them you can't deny."

"Take me to the Vicar, then, and

Let us see if *he* will believe me," replied the little hero.

Ah, marry! to the Vicar thou must go, I believe. But pray, if you did not take the peaches, who did?"

"I tell you once for all," said the unshaken boy, "that I never stole any thing out of your garden; but as to saying who did, I scorn to tell a tale *almost* as much as I do to tell a lie."

Finding all attempts to make Jem confess were ineffectual, the gardener bade him run home as fast as he could; and returned back to the vicarage meditating what he should do. At length, he determined to say nothing about it that night, but, in the morning, to give a full account of all to his master. This he accordingly did; but only received a strict charge from the Vicar to keep the whole matter a secret; who, at the same time, told him he had his own suspicions on the subject, and would watch there that evening himself.

Now, it never occurred to Ralph that his master's suspicions might possibly be different from his own;

and, therefore (notwithstanding the caution he had received,) by several sagacious shakes of his head, and many sage reflections on the misfortune of honest people's children turning out to be thieves, he completely ruined the poor boy's character with the more suspicious part of the villagers.

No one, indeed, had ever missed a farthing, or a morsel of tempting dainty, all the time they had employed him; yet after the gardener's tale began to spread, Jem found it very hard to obtain a job, or, when he could get one, it was still harder to procure a dry crust for his supper. Indeed, he was often very hungry, though he never complained; yet, in the evening, he would go to his mother's grave, and cry bitterly, when he thought that no one saw him but God.

In the mean time, near three weeks had passed, and no further depredations had been committed on the Vicar's garden, when Ralph having now another fine gathering of nectarines, began to triumph in having so successfully stopped the young plun-

derer. The little banditti also began to exult in their fancied security, and resolved once more to taste the Vicar's ripe fruit. The evening, accordingly, being fixed, and a fine moon seeming to favor their wicked design, they met exactly at a quarter past nine, behind a yew-tree which nearly joined the wall of the garden. They fixed on this hour because they knew the Vicar retired to his study at nine, and that the servants would be at supper in the kitchen. Thus secure, the ladder was placed against the wall ; they all climbed it safely, and descended on the other side, where they boldly stripped off every nectarine from the tree, which Ralph, in the pride of his heart, had that day, called, "The king of nectarine trees."— When, oh, the terrors of a guilty conscience ! a rustling was heard among the trees : each one took to his heels ; not one thought of his friend and accomplice ; but descended from the wall in haste ; and the impatient Stanhope ran away with the ladder just as Townsend reached the top of the wall.

—“Stay, Stanhope, stay; bring back the ladder: here's your old *friend* left behind you; do you hear?” cried Townsend, hallooing after him as loudly as he could; but Stanhope did not hear, or he did not think it was worth his while to come back for his *old friend* in a time like that. Again the noise among the trees was heard.

—What could he do!—To be discovered in that situation was certain ruin: yet the wall was high—the ditch deep and wide; however, attempt to leap it he must. And so he did; but guilt made him tremble, and he fell half smothered in the dirty water. In vain he called for help, no friend was near to answer him; till, at last, poor Jem, who came to pay his pious visit to his mother's grave, hearing him call, ran instantly to the spot, and asked who was there?

“Oh! help me out, for mercy's sake; I am half dead,” cried Townsend.

The generous little fellow stayed for no more, but throwing off his jacket, plunged in; and, after much diffi-

culty brought him safely out.—“There, Mr. Townsend,” he said, giving him a hatful of clean water to wash his face; “there, now I hope, since you have got safe out of *this* scrape you’ll never do such a wicked thing as to steal fruit again.”

“Thank you, honest Jem, I am sure, I am very much obliged to you. And I am sorry that I beat you so the other night; I am afraid I hurt you very much. But you look hungry; here, take these two nectarines.”

“No, I thank you,” said Jem, turning away; “I have not ate any thing, but a dry crust this morning for my breakfast, yet I thank God, I would rather starve than taste your *stolen* fruit. So, good night to you, Mr. Townsend.” Saying this, our little hero retired to his hard lodging, in a stable, where he slept till morning, without one uneasy thought to disturb his slumbers; whilst our gentleman’s son, limping along the church-yard, started at every grave, and fancied a spectre was hid behind every pillar in the cloisters. Wet and cold, he stole

up to bed in the dark ; and when the bright morning sun shone into his chamber, he feared to arise, lest he should be called to an account for the actions of the past night.

When they assembled the next morning at breakfast, each guilty eye seemed to ask what his companion had seen the last night ? but no one dared venture a question, lest their school fellows should suspect them.

The little banditti were six in number ; among whom Townsend and Stanhope, being the eldest and the richest, were acknowledged the leaders.

That morning the great school-bell rang at half-past nine, which was half an hour before the usual time. All who had watches, looked first at them, then at each other in surprise.

"What does this mean ?" said they, "our master does not think to abridge us of half our play hours, does he, and all for no fault that any of us have done ?"

Townsend, Stanhope, and their party, alone heard it in silent conster-

nation, and repaired each to his desk without uttering a word.

Ten minutes of dreadful suspense ensued: when Dr. Franklin entered, followed by the Vicar. All rose at their entrance; every eye was fixed on them as they walked to the upper end of the room, but not a sound was heard.

Dr. Franklin looked round the little assembly, and at Townsend and his companions among the rest. How each guilty heart trembled! "Mr. Townsend," at length, said the Doctor, in a stern voice. Townsend wished the ceiling to fall in and hide him; but he was forced to advance towards the *dreadful* desk, amid the buzz of fifty voices. "Do you know any thing of these nectarines?" said the Doctor, eyeing him with a severe but steady countenance; "they were found by the sweeper of the school room near your desk this morning."

"I did not put them there, upon my word, sir," replied Townsend; and in this he spoke the truth, for Stanhope, who took charge of the booty,

left them there in the haste and confusion of the past night.

"Very well, sir," replied Dr. Franklin; "but how came you not to be in bed last night till ten o'clock?"

"I was reciting against to-day, sir," he answered, remembering he had made the same excuse to his bedfellow the preceding night.

The Vicar looked at his friend; both were silent a few minutes; when the Doctor observed that he must make inquiries of some other person.

"Shall I sit down then, sir?" said Townsend, beginning to respire again; a motion of the Doctor's eye, however, kept him standing.

At that moment little Jem, who had received a hasty summons, entered the room. He had an honest heart, but the sight of so many eyes fixed on him made him blush.

"Come forward, my little friend," said the Vicar with a smile. "You have been at work in my garden this morning, have you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"I think the gardener said some-

thing about a gold medal which you found under the nectarine tree?"

"Yes, sir, and here it is; I begged Mr. Ralph to bring it to your honor, but he said, I had better give it to you myself." As he spoke, he produced a beautiful medal, which Townsend, a few days before, had received for being the best Greek scholar.

The medal was seen by all, and "Townsend's Greek medal!" was repeated by a buzz of whispering tongues.

"Oh! sir," said Townsend, finding a discovery was now inevitable, "I will tell you all, if you will but forgive me." He then related the whole transaction; taking good care, as he thought, that Stanhope and the other four should not escape sharing his punishment.

"Well, Mr. Stanhope," said the Doctor, "what can you say for yourself?"

"Nothing, sir," said Stanhope, advancing from the other end of the room, in great confusion. "No punishment you can inflict upon me will be too great, only, sir, if I might speak one word."

"Say on," replied the Doctor.

"Then, sir, it is, that you will please to pardon the other four, who are twice as young as I am, and would never have thought of stealing, I am sure, if Townsend and I had not first put it in their hearts."

As Stanhope thus interceded for the partners of his crime, the countenance of the Vicar, indicated pity mixed with hope, that he who could blush for his own faults, and yet plead for his accomplices, might repent and amend.

Dr. Franklin heard him with attention; then turning to Townsend, said, "You, sir, may return to your friends, and give what account you can of the transactions of this day. Had you possessed an honest heart, your talents would have reflected honor on them and on me; but as you are capable of hiding your crimes with the basest falsehood, I am convinced you are *thoroughly* depraved: Retire, I say, sir, you are no longer one of this community."

Townsend, overwhelmed with con-

fusion, now quitted the room. Stanhope and his companions stood in silent expectation. "And now, gentlemen," continued the Doctor, turning to them, "what do you think *you* deserve?"

"The same disgrace that Townsend has just received, sir," replied Stanhope; "yet I hope you will give me the severest punishment I can have in your school, and I will joyfully submit to any thing so as I am not expelled."

"It certainly was my intention to expel every one whom I found concerned in this infamous robbery," said the Doctor, "but, as some sparks of candor appear in you, Mr. Stanhope, I hope that you are not totally depraved; I shall therefore permit you with your four accomplices to form a separate class, till your good conduct shall have entitled you to be again admitted into your former places."

"Oh! sir, to the latest moment of my life, I shall never forget this lesson."

"I hope not; and if you make a

proper use of it, I may soon again shake hands with you as one of my much esteemed young friends : otherwise, your talents, your fortune, or even the great respectability of your father's character, will never gain you the esteem of the wise and good."

"Well," said the Vicar, with a smile, "justice has now been administered to the guilty ; and it remains to take public notice of your noble conduct, my honest little lad. I overheard your conversation with Mr. Townsend last night ; and, from that moment, resolved to protect you in future. You shall live with me, and I will myself instruct you ; and when you are old enough to take care of yourself, will settle you in whatever business your inclination and abilities may lead you to choose. Nor do I doubt of one day seeing you an honorable and useful member of society, *because I see that you fear God.*" As the benevolent Vicar spoke the last words, he gave his hand, in token of esteem, to poor Jem, whose eyes were filled with tears of gratitude.

The good Vicar then rose to depart; and Dr. Franklin followed him, saying—"Those who think they deserve it, may call the remainder of the day their own."

This permission from the Doctor was no sooner heard, than all those whose consciences did not accuse them, crowded round the Vicar to gain that smile of which they were so proud. But Stanhope and his companions remained in a corner of the room by themselves, and unnoticed by any one but little Jem; who as the Vicar led him out of the apartment, turned towards the sorrowful guilty little group with a tear of genuine pity.

Many a merry heart, which had before experienced Jem's good nature, now wished him joy of his *good fortune*; the Vicar, however, assured them, it was not *good fortune*, but a reward which God bestowed on his unshaken honesty.

HYMNS.

HYMN I.

LET Avarice from shore to shore
 Her fav'rite god pursue ;
 Thy word, O Lord, we value more
 Than India or Peru.

Here mines of knowledge, love, and joy,
 Are open'd to our sight,
 The purest gold without alloy,
 And gems divinely bright.

The counsels of Redeeming Grace,
 These sacred leaves unfold ;
 And here the Savior's lovely face
 Our raptured eyes behold.

Here light, descending from above,
 Directs our doubtful feet ;
 Here promises of heav'nly love
 Our ardent wishes meet.

Our num'rous griefs are here redress'd,
 And all our wants supply'd ;
 Nought we can ask, to make us bless'd,
 Is in this book deny'd.

For these inestimable gains,
 That so enrich the mind,
 O may we search with eager pains,
 Assur'd that we shall find.

HYMN II.

My Savior! let me hear thy voice
But gently whisper peace,
And all my warmest powers shall join
To celebrate the grace.

Dispel my fears, call me thy child,
And speak my sins forgiven;
The accents mild shall charm mine ear,
Sweet as the harps of heaven.

Then wheresoe'er thy hand shall lead,
The darkest path I'll tread;
Cheerful I'll quit these mortal shores,
And mingle with the dead:

When dreadful guilt is done away,
No other fears we know;
That hand which scatters pardon down
Will all things else bestow.







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